



# Libby Sampling - 2002

EPA Information Center \* 501 Mineral Avenue, Libby, MT 59923\*  
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Fact Sheet #8

May 2002

In May 2002, EPA will begin sampling all properties in the Libby area to screen out areas where there is no contamination and find priority areas for cleanup. Samplers should complete the screening by November 2002. The screening is the first phase of the Superfund Remedial Investigation (RI) and is broader than prior investigations and cleanups done by EPA's Removal program. In general, the Remedial program handles long-term cleanups and the Removal program handles short-term cleanups. In Libby, *both* programs will operate at the same time.

## Step-by-Step Approach

Previous EPA sampling focused on those areas where asbestos contamination was *known* or *suspected*, such as around the former vermiculite processing areas. The intent was to find the worst areas and address them quickly via the Removal program.

Now that the site is proposed to the National Priorities List (NPL), EPA will begin a systematic screening for potential contamination at all properties in the Libby area. The Removal program and Remedial program will work together to clean up contaminated areas inside and outside of buildings.

There is no obvious pattern to contamination in Libby, and asbestos-contaminated vermiculite products and wastes could have been used anywhere. Thus, EPA feels it is necessary to at least minimally investigate every property in the area.

## Expected Results

The goal of the study is to find Libby asbestos.

Sources may include Zonolite attic insulation (ZAI) and various vermiculite products and wastes. The contamination may be obvious or hidden. Potentially hidden sources include homes where vermiculite workers are known to have lived or homes in close proximity to known contaminated properties.

Based on the results, each property, or portion of a property (such as a building or smaller area), will be classified in one of three ways:

1. **"Lots of Asbestos."** Contains ZAI or high levels of asbestos. Presents a clearly unacceptable health risk and will be flagged for additional investigation and cleanup.
2. **"Some Asbestos"**. No ZAI or other high level sources, but some evidence that asbestos is present in outdoor soils and may have contaminated indoor dust. May require further study, such as indoor dust sampling, to determine whether cleanup is necessary.
3. **"No Asbestos Detected."** No measurable asbestos outdoors, and no reason to suspect indoor dust may be contaminated. Property owners will be given "comfort letters" indicating the building will likely require no additional study or cleanup. EPA believes most properties will fall into this category.



## Please Be Patient

There are over 3,000 properties to be screened - far too many for us to try to set up telephone appointments. Instead, we will work area by area around town, leaving advance flyers to advise property owners of our plans and attempting to talk to residents.

We will need your cooperation and a great deal of flexibility to get the work done in timely manner. If you are selling your property, please contact the EPA Information Center (293-6194).

If you don't hear from us immediately, don't worry. We *will* get to everyone eventually. Call us if you haven't heard from us, by flyer or otherwise, by mid-September.

## What Will Happen at Each Property?

Beginning in May, teams of samplers will be going door-to-door, talking with residents or leaving flyers, to arrange for screening. The teams will arrange a time for sampling and they *must* also obtain a signed access agreement from the property owner in order to sample. They will occasionally work evenings and weekends to try to reach everyone.

The screening at each property will consist of three parts:

1. **Visual inspection.** Samplers will look for ZAI indoors and for other sources of asbestos outdoors.
2. **Verbal interview.** Samplers will ask several questions related to the history of the property and current conditions.
3. **Outdoor sampling.** Samplers will collect samples in areas such as gardens, unpaved driveways, and the yard.



The entire process will take about two hours, and the resident needs to be present only for the first hour. When results are available, EPA will mail them to the owner with a detailed explanation and the likely next steps. Properties in the "No Asbestos Detected" category will receive comfort letters at that time.

## Do You Have Any Questions?

If you have questions on your results or anything else related to the EPA work in Libby, you can contact the EPA Information Center (293-6194). You can also attend a monthly Community Advisory Group (CAG) meeting on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month at 7:00 PM in the Ponderosa Room of City Hall.

There will be an EPA Availability Session, on the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of each month, at the same place and time. These sessions are provided specifically to answer any questions you might have about the work being conducted in Libby.



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